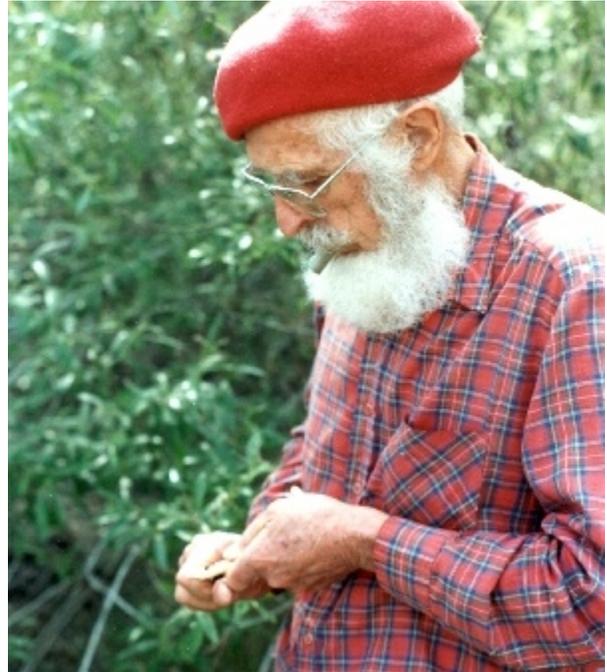


## **Bard McAllister**

June 2, 1918 -- October 29, 2001



**Bard carving a whistle\***

### **MEMORIAL MINUTE FOR BARD MCALLISTER**

Bard McAllister, member of Visalia Friends Meeting, died October 29, 2001, of natural causes at the age of 83. He was born on June 2, 1918, in Berea, Kentucky, to Cloyd North McAllister and Mary S. McAllister. After graduating from Berea College, Bard obtained a Masters in Community Recreation at New York University, a degree that included work in community development. He then became program Director at House of Industry, a settlement house in Philadelphia. On a nature hike to Hawk Mountain, he met Olga Zalokoski, whom he later married, a union that flourished almost 60 years.

A World War II conscientious objector, Bard did wartime Civilian Public Service work with the Forest Service and Public Health Service. In 1946 he joined the staff of the American Friends Service Committee, establishing and monitoring work camps in the eastern United States. He later served with the Presbyterian Mission Board as an economic developer and the Carroll Service Council of Carrollton, Georgia.

In 1955, once again working with the American Friends Service Committee, Bard, with Olga and their four sons, came to Visalia. Bard's assignment was to assess the needs of farm workers. He did this by taking a job as a farm laborer and asking his co-workers what they'd most like to have. Almost to a person they stated their lives would be better if only they had a house. The Service Committee, drawing upon a similar housing project in 1930 in Pennsylvania, obtained a grant from the Rosenberg Foundation to build three self-help houses in Goshen, followed by 17 more in nearby rural

communities. Families worked as a group, under the direction of skilled craftsmen, to complete their homes. The effort was such a success that the federal War on Poverty agreed to fund the startup of Self-Help Enterprises. Self-Help Enterprises continues today. Over the years it has helped families build nearly 5000 houses in central California, rehabilitate an equal number, and has spawned over 100 similar organizations nationwide.

Meanwhile, Bard, with the AFSC Farm Labor Committee, worked in other ways to improve his community. They helped to bring water to Teviston, a tiny, poor, rural African-American community in Tulare County. Bard transported farm workers to congressional hearings so they could testify against the bracero program and for legislation to require drinking water and toilet facilities in the fields. They helped establish SCICON, an environmental science outdoor education school, still attended yearly by most Tulare County fifth and sixth graders.

Off to Zambia, Africa, in 1966, accompanied by Olga and the family, Bard did more community development work for the American Friends Service Committee. There he started adult education programs, cooperatives and more self-help housing. When the family returned to Visalia in 1972, Bard became director of the Family Planning Program in Tulare County. By 1973 he had returned to Self-Help Enterprises as Community Development Director, concentrating on rural community water and sewer projects throughout the San Joaquin Valley.

Retirement in 1983 freed Bard to volunteer more than full time for all the organizations he admired. Donning his signature red beret, he guided us on Audubon bird counts, led the Audubon effort to establish the first toxic waste pickup in the county, walked vigorously in the annual CROP walk (after gathering more pledges than anyone else) to help overcome hunger, and served on the board of Foodlink, the food bank of the county, all the while raising quantities of home-grown produce in his garden and orchard to eat, preserve and give away.

Bard's Memorial Meeting of November 10, 2001, was the largest gathering ever experienced at the Visalia Meeting. The Meeting House was filled with his family and "best friends;" the French doors were opened, and we spilled out onto the lawn with 100 rental chairs...200 or so in all. The tributes were many, tender and mighty. They were in Spanish and English, given by family, young folk and octogenarians, and included tales of inspiration and funny stories that ended in bursts of laughter.

Bard's love for life was a major impetus for his life-long pacifism. He devoted himself to empowering the powerless, challenging the comfortable and inspiring future environmentalists. He lives on in the lives and works of those he inspired. As Stephen Thierman wrote for all of us, "Thank you, Bard. We loved you, admired you and were inspired by you, and we carry you in our hearts."

*\*The item in Bard's mouth is the bark of a twig, soon to be a whistle, not a cigar!*

For Bard from Krishna

## Today my world has shrunk a little bit.

*Words written soon after hearing of Bard's passing  
Jan 21-2002*

When the tree swallow flies out of her nest  
As soars over the cliffs and trees  
They soar with Bard's spirit.

When the grape from the frozen ground  
Breaks out in small green leaf  
Pushing up hope and fruit  
They push up Bard's spirit

When that large Kumquat tree  
Will in time my garden overpower  
Only Bard and I know it started  
With a cutting from Bard's acre!!

Goodbye Bard, Friend, gentle giant  
Lover of Birds and all things free  
It is only sad that you leave us to mourn  
Whilst you yourself are free!!

That last trip I will well remember  
In open and in vast spaces  
Looking for birds, the seeing of swallows  
Among many giants have I walked  
But of them you are the tallest of them all.

Krishna Seshan

# A Remembrance of Bard

By Melissa Howard

I did not become aware of the true magnitude of Bard's work until I was an adult and happened to find a book with a chapter about his work in Teviston at our local library. I had the good fortune, though, to grow up knowing the magnitude of his kindness as a man. We moved to Visalia and started going to Quaker meeting when I was nine years old. At Quaker meeting I found shining examples in Bard, Bill, Bob, and Walt that there were trustworthy, kind, honorable, admirable men in this world. I mention them all because it will in one sense be too late at any future memorials.

Bard, with his Santa Claus beard, red beret, and twinkle in his eye went out of his way to be kind to me and it touched me deeply. At our Quaker camping trip to Montanyo de Oro when I was about 11, Bard took a group of us children on a little hike. He joyfully explained what all the plants were and then stopped and carved a bamboo flute for me and showed me how to play it. I was so shy in those days I could hardly speak, but I was stunned to my core that someone would do that for me. A simple act, perhaps, but it took time and effort there in the hot sun on the mountain side. Watching Bard whittle I told myself that I would save that flute for the rest of my life and that I would never forget his kindness to me that day. From that day to this that flute has been prominently displayed on my bookshelves and every time I look at it I remember Bard and it brings me joy.

I don't know if it was before the Montanyo de Oro camping trip or after, but it was around the same time that I was stunned again when Bard and Olga called our house one weekend morning and invited me to go bird watching with them. I was painfully shy and usually felt utterly invisible, the fact that they had even thought of me was beyond my comprehension. Me? They wanted to go bird watching with me? I said I would go, but my heart was pounding with fear. Did they really want someone to join them for the whole day who didn't know how to make conversation? Maybe they had made a mistake and would discover it halfway up the mountain. I was the one who was mistaken. By the time we were halfway up the mountain Bard and Olga had asked me so many questions and told me so many things about birds and nature and life I forgot that I was shy. I wanted to see the birds the way they saw them with excitement and wonder. I wanted to learn all they had to teach. I saw a new world through their binoculars that day. We hunted for pretty pebbles in a creek and I knew I would save them the rest of my

life the same way I did the flute. We laughed over our picnic lunch and I felt so warm and peaceful inside I never wanted that day to end. Thank you Bard, thank you Olga, for all the large and small acts of kindness you have done. They won't be forgotten.